

*Grants Awarded to Lafourche, Ascension and Terrebonne Sheriff's Offices, Houma Police Department*

September 1, 2010

WASHINGTON – Congressman Charlie Melancon (LA-03) announced today that four more federal law enforcement grants totaling \$140,993 have been awarded to the sheriffs' departments in Lafourche, Ascension and Terrebonne Parishes and the Houma Police Department. The grants will support a variety of law enforcement initiatives, from reducing narcotics-related crimes to purchasing safer, smarter taser equipment, to providing training for officers and community emergency response teams.

**“For communities across South Louisiana, these federal grants will supply our local law enforcement officers with much-needed resources, while relieving pressure on parish budgets,”** said Rep. Melancon. **“By providing advanced equipment, access to resources, and new training, our sheriff's and police departments can better serve our communities and protect our families in South Louisiana.”**

The investments Congressman Melancon announced today are funded through the U.S. Department of Justice's [Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant Program](#), which supports an array of initiatives to prevent and control local crime based on state and local needs. Congressman Melancon voted to fund the Byrne Grant Program when he supported the Fiscal Year 2010 Justice Department Appropriations bill.

The Lafourche Parish Sheriff's Office received an \$18,213 federal grant to support targeted efforts to reduce drug-related crimes and enhance public safety by funding overtime compensation for 10 police officers.

Lafourche Parish Sheriff Craig Webre said, **“Unfortunately, the drug problem is not going away in Lafourche Parish. It is in fact on the rise with addiction a major issue in this parish and this country. Every dollar we can get to combat illegal narcotics activity is a plus. On behalf of the men and women of the Lafourche Parish Sheriff's Office, I thank the Congressman for his work for us.”**

The Ascension Parish Sheriff's Office received a \$44,916 federal grant to install new camera systems at their Fleet Maintenance Site and Evidence Facility to better secure police vehicles, equipment and evidence collection.

Ascension Parish Sheriff Jeffrey Wiley said, **“I am appreciative of the entire [congressional] delegation for their efforts and, in particular, Congressman Melancon's interest. This equipment, which is very sophisticated, will allow us to enhance security at our Fleet Maintenance site and Evidence Facility.”**

The Terrebonne Parish Sheriff's Office received a \$41,849 federal grant to purchase equipment and fund training for “Operation Taser.” The Sheriff's Office will purchase 45 taser packages and nine taser cartridges to provide officers with a “less-than-lethal” alternative and reduce the risks posed to public safety.

Terrebonne Parish Sheriff L. Vernon Bourgeois said, **“The taser is a tool that is very necessary for safer law enforcement. There are situations where you would need to stop someone but you don’t want to risk a fatal shooting. The taser is an alternative without that risk. Tasers are expensive but, now, with this grant, we can finally afford to use them.”**

Finally, the Houma Police Department received a \$36,015 federal grant to fund the purchase of new surveillance equipment, training for five officers through the Bureau of Justice Assistance, and to sponsor 20 teens to participate in a Teen Community Emergency Response Team Training.

Houma Police Chief Todd Duplantis said, **“One of the things we know we’ll be facing in 2011 is budget cuts. This grant allows us to continue paying overtime to officers so we can continue our work to reduce crime. The license plate ID and surveillance system will help us find and identify stolen cars and continue our work with Operation PEACE (Police Eyes Against Criminal Engagement).”**

Sgt. Bobby O’Bryan said the Teen CERT (Community Emergency Response Team) program is an example of an innovative way to use federal grant funding. Teen CERT began as a pilot program in partnership with the Lafourche Parish Sheriff’s Office to promote youth involvement in local emergency response work.

**“We trained 100 teens in tactical and logistical emergency response,”** said Sgt. Bobby O’Bryan of the Houma Police Department.

**“The program gives these teens an opportunity during the summer that doesn’t cost them anything. These teens are smart. Now, 100 of them are trained in emergency response and are more involved in the community.”**

Congressman Melancon has been a strong supporter in Congress of local law enforcement. He has introduced the [First Responders Act](#), legislation to enhance disability benefits for public safety officers who have been permanently and totally disabled by a catastrophic injury sustained in the line of duty. U.S. Senator Mary Landrieu (D-La.) has introduced companion legislation in the Senate, and the bills have been endorsed by the Fraternal Order of Police.

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